A SECOND

LETTER

To the AUTHOR of the

Ecclesiastic Characteristics.

WHEREIN

The improvement the presbytery of Edinburgh, and others have made in the author's maxims, are briefly illustrated.

Illud tamen arcte tenent accurateque defendunt voluptatem, esse summum bonum, quæ quidem mihi vox pecudum videtur esse non hominum. Quidquam bonum est, quod non eum qui id possidet meliorem facit?

CICERO.

Quæ feciſſe juvat facta referre pudet.

OVID.

Hoc illud est precipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in illustri posita monumento tueri.

T. LIV.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A SECOND LETTER

To the AUTHOR of the Eccleſiaſtic Characteriſtics.

SINCE the firſt publication of your Characteriſtics, we have made ſuch good improvement, in the maxims therein laid down, that we have almoſt now come to a perfect pitch of moderation. 'Tis with pleaſure and ſatisfaction I can at preſent acquaint you, that the majority of members in our presbytery are more fierce for moderation than heretofore: they ſo highly approve of your maxims, that they rather ſeem to exceed them, than fall ſhort of them. I believe in a very ſhort time, we ſhall have moderation brought to its higheſt ſummit.

I make no doubt, but you have heard to what glorious length a moderate brother of late hath advanced our happy ſcheme of moderation; who, in compliance with your 6th

maxim, hath not only abridged the old toilſome labour of ſtudy and preaching, but advanced it ſo far, that one may in a week's time compoſe as much matter as procure him his whole year's ſtipend, and never preach one word. This, Sir, I preſume, is no ſmall improvement of your excellent maxim; and what poſſibly you never dream'd would be put in execution: but our age produces noble wits, and exalted genius's; we indeed had well nigh got ſour dregs to drink from this bleſſed attainment, on account of the precipitate manner it was brought to light, in which there was ſomething immoderate, which ſeldom eſcapes ſome mark of diſpleaſure: for ſome brethren thinking it an immoderate piece of moderation, began to think upon a method to render it a little more moderate, (tho' indeed to the wrong ſide) and dealt ſomewhat rudely towards a worthy brother, an abettor of this improvement: but we hope they rather meant to ſhew their diſlike at the immoderate way of its appearance, than at the improvement itſelf. For we muſt acknowledge, the manner of its coming to light was a little immoderate, tho' the attainment itſelf was highly moderate and laudable. The presbytery's conduct did indeed much ſurprize many well-wiſhers to our glorious ſcheme of moderation; thinking, by their method of dealing with the worthy brother, and the noble cauſe he

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maintained, they intended nothing ſhort of immoderation, and meant to diſcourage this new diſcovery altogether; but ſince have found, tho' they did ſomething tending to immoderate principles, which we hope they'll ſoon retract, yet they never intended any injury to moderation: for now they have much more than compenſate their former miſtake, by evidencing themſelves the true, ſincere friends of moderation.

I don't queſtion but you have had intelligence of the late trouble our presbytery met with from a poor mean creature of theorthodox ſtamp, who intended, had not favourite death carried him hence, to have deprived us of one of our excellent bodies of divinity, the immortal eſſays of my L—— K——. This old orthodoxian condemning many excellent doctrines of moderation, in a poor piteous performance of his, had the aſſurance, I ſhould have ſaid impudence, to libel the publiſhers of the foreſaid glorious ſyſtem, inſiſting for juſtice upon them, unleſs they ſhould give up their author. This immoderate proceſs, tho' altogether unreaſonable, the preſbytery were obliged, for moderation ſake, to give a hearing; for ſome brethren inclining too much to orthodoxy, mightily favoured this immoderate brother, and his unjuſt cauſe: therefore the presbytery, that they might convince the r brethren, caſt light on the cauſe

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of moderation, and ſhew the inconſiſtency of that orthodoxian's plea, did for a ſeaſon ſuffer this proceſs to go on, and be canvaſs'd before them. This court, Sir, tho' thus far complied, has in it many members faithful obſervers of your noble maxims, and are endued with gallant ſpirits, to defend any branch of moderation; theſe yet for a ſeaſon waited, in a way of protracting the proceſs, hoping, as indeed it happened, the grim meſſenger would favour their good cauſe. For tho' it was hard to hear our darling ſcheme of moderation run down from day to day, by a mean bigotted orthodox brother; yet the hopes of an eaſy riddance of both him and his cauſe, made us bear that hardſhip with the greater patience. We were ſufficiently aware, had we puſh'd the matter too hard, by abſolutely refuſing that poor cauſe a hearing, or yet throwing it aſide too raſhly, the affair might have come to a diſpute; and tho' we of the moderate ſide are abundantly able to defend our cauſe, in our own way of arguing, yet we don't pretend to ſo much logic, as to cope with ſuch as the old orthodoxian, who would not ſwerve one jot from the hamper'd uſe of reaſon: for being paſt feeling, thro' old age, had no reliſh for our doctrine of feelings, laid down in our noble ſyſtem, nor yet for our way of defending it: therefore, for fear of worſe conſequences, the reverend presbytery

ry walk'd ſoftly, waiting and longing for the now come happy event.

This joyful deliverance being wrought, the enemy of our glorious work of moderation dead, we had ſmall difficulty in reſcuing our excellent body of divinity from all the former aſperſions caſt upon it. We indeed met with ſome oppoſition from ſome brethren too much attached to orthodoxy; but theſe wanting the ſpirit of our noble heroes for moderation, were ſoon made to knock under, and ſubmit. Before the day of our glorious conqueſt, we were a little afraid, by means of a report ſpreading, that ſome champions of the orthodox ſide had undertaken to carry on the old deceaſt orthodoxian's plea; but when it came to a puſh, we found the report altogether falſe.

We have now, for our fault, in the caſe of the worthy brother formerly mentioned, made a ſufficient amendment: we have, according to your laudable maxim, wreſted the weapon out of the orthodox hands, and by their own conceſſions, proven the excellent book of morals altogether ſound and orthodox: we have made it appear, that its author is a ſincere Calviniſt, and his performance as ſound as *Calvin*'s inſtitutions, or *Marci medulla theologiæ*. This, you know, was eaſy done by ſuch ſuperior wits as our claſs is made up of; eſpecially, as the troubleſome old orthodox

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brother was dead: for we of the moderate ſtamp are moſt dextrous in defending an argument, when either our antagoniſt is dead, or when no body is to oppoſe us. This is an eminent part of a moderate man's character, to diſpute his cauſe nicely among his brethren, and condemn his opponent behind his back. This is the way we gain many noble victories, and divide much ſpoil, without ever receiving one wound. For you know, if our rhetoric be fluent, 'tis of ſmall conſequence whether our logic be concluſive or not.

Thus, Sir, I apprehend, we have made a notable improvement of your maxims, in that we have converted a profeſſed deiſt, into a ſincere Calviniſt, and never altered one jot of his principles. We have reconciled freedom and neceſſity, and proven, that a man's will is altogether free, and yet abſolutely determined by motives good or bad; that the will is both free and forc'd at the ſame time; that it is not in any one's power to do otherwiſe than he doth; and yet it is lawful to puniſh him for his actions; that the judgment muſt determine the beauty or deformity, goodneſs or badneſs of every thing, before the will can act thereanent; that a ſenſe of feeling things, good or evil, determines us in our choice, and yet our choice is quite free; that men are under a neceſſity, from theſe feelings, to do every thing they do; that God is the author of

theſe feelings; that ſome of them are deceitful, and yet God not the author of deceit: that evil actions proceed from deceitful feeling, yet God is not the author of ſin. Theſe things we have proven to be quite conſiſtent, and agreeable, ſo that no moderate man can in the leaſt doubt about them. For it is plain, from what is laid down in a late defence of our darling ſyſtem, that Adam was under a fatal neceſſity to eat the forbidden fruit, and yet perfectly poſſeſs'd with a freedom of will; that ſin had never been, unleſs it had proceeded from God, and yet God is not the author of ſin. Theſe Sir, are improvements certainly worthy the conſideration of every moderate man, and highly commendable in their kind; and no doubt, will give you great ſatisfaction to hear of your maxims ſo well improven.

But one thing of late, has given us no ſmall ſurprize, from an airth we ſcarcely would have expected it; I mean, an immoderate proceeding of the presbytery of Glaſgow; who unhappily, have determined againſt every dramatic entertainment, ſo agreeable to, and every way becoming a moderate man: that presbytery which is matter of lamentation, it ſeems are too full of orthodox ſentiments; and ſeem to run very hard, when no leſs will ſerve them, than bringing the late noble diſcovery to the general aſſembly, and

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there inſiſt for injuſtice upon our wonderful adept, and a goodly number of moderate brethren. This is a thing, in its nature, of weighty conſideration, and would be much more ſo, were it not that we hope that court is better fix'd upon moderate principles, than to give too much encouragement to ſuch orthodox overtures; and ſurely it would be very immoderate, and diſagreeable, to extirpate ſuch a virtuous entertainment as the ſtage from among us, whereby our better ſort of people are ſo much charm'd and delighted. Our tender delicate virtuoſo's ſhould no doubt exclaim againſt ſuch hard treatment, as the depriving them of ſo excellent an opportunity of ſeeing what, and whom they love beſt, almoſt once a week; it would ſcarcely have been expected that ſo much orthodoxy would have ariſen in that weſtern part of Scotland, where the worthy Mr. L—m—n hath taught for ſome time ſo many moderate principles, and given ſuch moderate examples; but times take ſad turns; but we hope that presbytery mean no harm to moderation, but only want to be imitating, and conceal moderate, and favourable ſentiments, under ſomewhat rude expreſſions. Having given you ſome account of the ſucceſs and improvement of moderation in our presbytery, and ſome parts adjacent, you will no doubt be deſirous to hear how the ſame flouriſhes in our univerſity, among

mong thoſe who are the hope of the ſucceeding age.

In anſwer to this, I muſt own things are not ſo well as could be wiſh'd; for the youth, the moſt part of whom are well inclin'd to moderation, are ſadly kept at under, by a ſurly grim looking mortal, that is almoſt pregnant of orthodoxy, who is not quite well affected toward the ſcheme of moderation. Young men are now much fatigued, and wearied, in preparing and mandating orthodox diſcourſes, to the great detriment of moderation; yet 'tis matter of thankfulneſs, that a great deal of mutual forbearance is uſed toward moderate brethren. We have a good number of young men in our univerſity at preſent, that not only bloom well for moderation, but are already extremely moderate; they are ſo far from being like the ſilly inſignificant orthodox, whinging, and putting on a face of religion, that they are jolly, gay, and gallant, every way ſuiting the humours of the age, and beſeeming moderation. They don't ſpeak hampered as before a judge, but talk with air and freedom, not ſtanding at what the orthodox call minch'd oaths, but can uſe theſe withall manner of freedom, and can even advance to what more eminently ornaments one's converſation, as G—d d——n ye, and the like; and they are not only very polite, and grand in their converſation, but very refin'd in their choice of books: agreeable to your maxim, they read the moſt celebrated au-

thors for moderation, inſtead of reading the dull draughts of Pictet and Turrentine, they are abundantly entertain'd with Shakeſpear, and other of the dramatic ſyſtems. So far are ſome advanced in moderation, that a hopeful youth could boaſt, that inſtead of *Marci modulla thelogiæ*, one ſabbath's afternoon, he read that renown'd tract of divinity, Love in a tub. Theſe young gentlemen have almoſt come to abſolute perfection in your ſeventh maxim; they have now laid aſide all manner of exerciſe and concern about what the orthodox call religion and ſerioufneſs, and moſt of them are ſo moderate on this particular, that they are as void of religion and ſoul-exerciſe, as Kouli Kan, or the great Mogul. But as to things of a more noble nature, ſuch as gaiety and politeneſs, ſkill in fine authors, fine tropes and figures of ſpeech, they are well nigh compleat maſters of theſe. Another fine attainment the young gentlemen clergy have come at, is, their elegant behaviour towards the young ladies. You ſhall ſcarce find a young man of the foreſaid profeſſion, but can as handſomely, politely, and confidently, gallant the ladies, as his l———p, or the right honourable c———l ——— For you muſt underſtand, agreeable to your maxims, the moſt part of the clergy ſerve a ſhort kind of apprenticeſhip to his honour, capt. ——— and lieut. ———, where they ſoon learn the a-

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bove qualification. And to tell the truth, the firſt ſort of gentlemen will ſcarce proceed in any thing, but the latter will follow them in it. Moreover, he is ſcarcely accounted one of any tolerable ſenſe, that cannot on ſabbath's afternoon, when ſermon is over, to rub off any conviction that may have taken hold of him, by means of an orthodox ſermon, go to the fields with the ladies, and talk of what paſt in concert-hall the night before, which is no doubt a very eminent piece of moderation. If you ſhall now after all, enquire at me, what improvement is made in compoſition of ſermons, and diſcourſes? I anſwer, I believe there never was ſuch a pitch of perfection attain'd to in this particular; for not a few of our *juvenes clerici* are ſuch maſters of philoſophy, rhetoric, and compoſition, that they can compoſe ſermons merely of words, without almoſt any ſignification at all, and yet be accounted the only wits of the age. Such a length have they arrived at, that they have no more ado but harangue in fine language, whether it be to the purpoſe, or not; this is, no doubt, a very moderate attainment. They have learn'd from Cicero, every man to follow the dictates of his own genius; and tho' other things may be better and weightier, yet to take their meaſures from the bent of their own particular, accounting it vain to ſtrive againſt nature, or to purſue any thing

that lays a force upon nature; for ſure no body that's maſter of any fine qualification, but ſhould act according thereto: for, ſays Cicero, what every man has peculiar to himſelf, is that which beſt becomes him. And ſure nothing is more becoming a young man, than to ſpeak ſo as to acquire admiration; and nothing ſure more admirable, than that what I mentioned above. From what is ſaid above, I preſume Sir, we need not deſpair of moderation, when ſo many hopeful youths are coming up to ſupport it.

But I am now going to ſhow you, I preſume, to your great ſatisfaction, what influence your renown'd maxims hath already upon every ſort of people, in and about Edinburgh, and how far they walk agreeable thereto.

Firſt, As to our miniſters, they are ſo faithful obſervers of every individual maxim, that they fall ſhort in no particular; they are ſo moderate in their ſermons, that they ſcorn to grate any body's humour, by ſharply reproving their vices; and can as calmly diſcourſe of heaven, happineſs, hell, and damnation, as they can read the moral eſſays. And truly, ſhould they do otherwiſe, they ſhould no doubt fall ſhort of moderation; for it would be very immoderate, ſo to preach the terrors of the law, as to fright the glorious gays that grace our venerable audiences; for theſe are too well poſſeſs'd of happineſs and

pleaſure

pleaſure already, to expect any better; and it would be both cruel and uncharitable to make them worſe. Could any thing be more immoderate and unreaſonable than to fright theſe glorious lillies of levity, from their paradiſe of pleaſure, for the doubtful ſuppoſitum of heaven; and fear of the ſcar-crow of hell?

Should miniſters turn too ſharp in their reproofs, in exclaiming againſt ſabbath-breaking, drunkeneſs, balls, aſſemblies, or concerts, they would ſoon have few to preach to, and incur both the ladies and gentlemen's diſpleaſure; for it would be very unreaſonable to reprove the ladies for walking abroad on the ſabbath-afternoons, when 'tis only then they have greateſt numbers to ſee them; and we all know that the moſt part of ladies, would forfeit heaven, for the ſake of being accounted gay. And as for the majority of gentlemen, they could not ſtay in heaven were the ladies awanting; nor ſtay out of hell if they were in't; therefore it would be very immoderate to encroach too much upon their pleaſures, eſpecially conſidering miniſters themſelves have ſo often the happineſs to drain the juice of the Indian plant in ſplendid China, at their tables, and ſqueeze the cluſter with great ſatisfaction: therefore inſtead of crying up holineſs, religion, and ſerioufneſs, according to your maxims, miniſters preach up the moral ſenſe, devotion, order, harmony, and piety; all

which

which they ſo preach that any one ſhould be ready to think they ſcarcely believed one word they ſpake. Thus much for their moderation.

Secondly, Our miniſters are well countenanced by our magiſtrates, in the noble ſcheme of moderation; for as miniſters don't reprove vice, neither do our magiſtrates; they can allow crowds of people of all ſorts to traverſe the ſtreets, and meadows, on the ſabbath, with as much freedom as on a fair-day, or a market; and for curſing, and blaſpheming openly at all times, none ever meets with a challenge for it. There is no doubt magiſtrates in former periods, had miſtaken the apoſtle, where he ſays, magiſtrates are terrors to evil doers, and a praiſe to them that do well; when they would allow no body to divert themſelves on the ſabbath-day, but puniſh'd breach of the Lord's-day, as well as breach of acts of parliament: the apoſtle ſurely means the quite oppoſite of what he ſpeaks there, for both miniſters and magiſtrates. being wiſer now than formerly, muſt no doubt embrace the trueſt meaning of the text.

Thirdly, People of every profeſſion, are wonderfully moderate; the honourable phyſician, accounts nothing uſeful or of conſequence that comes not within a pig or ſome other of his receivers; he reckons nothing worthy our knowledge, that cannot be applied

ed to the body; and for a future ſtate, he believes it no more than Simpſon's world of the moon; and gives as much credit to what the orthodox call the holy ſcriptures, as to Æſop's fables, or Gulliver's men of 50 foot high. Theſe Sir, are a very moderate ſort of men. The gentlemen of the law are much of the ſame ſentiment; and lay ſtreſs upon nothing but acts of parliament, and decreets of ſeſſion; a man among them, if he underſtands M'Kenzie's inſtitutions, the twelve tables, and my Lord Stair's works, paſſes for as good a chriſtian, as either Paul or Auguſtine. In fine, moderation is come to ſuch a length, that the moſt part can be accounted good chriſtians, and practiſe no religion at all: for when a a national faſt happens, the moſt part will cry out rudely againſt theſe poor orthodox creatures the ſeceders, for not yielding obedience to his majeſty's act, when at the ſame time, they keep it themſelves as little as they do; for to ſpeak the truth, we are ſenſible the ſeceders are as loyal ſubjects as we; and have reaſons for their conduct in not giving obedience to ſuch acts; yet we hate them, becauſe they never ſpeak well of a moderate man; and therefore could wiſh all manner of miſchief to come on them. Thus Sir, your maxims being ſo well imprinted on the hearts of every one, can never miſs to be perpetuated.

I am Yours, in all the maxims of moderation.

P. S. I shall here briefly give you the character of a certain society, who meet frequently for improvement in knowledge, and philosophy. That society Sir, are so sincerely the sons of moderation, that no society can be more moderate in their management; I am certainly informed, that for the more immediate attainment of philosophy, at one and the same time, they can enjoy the pleasure of two eminent contradictions, music, laughter, and philosophy; these tho' somewhat contradictory, yet you know best suit the taste of moderate youth; who can neither endure to trace the labyrinths of philosophy, nor follow the fatigues of study. Another very eminent piece of the character of this society is, that the leaders know little more than error, and the rest know scarcely any thing at all: but more than all, they usually handle the most noble and necessary questions, for as much as I am certainly informed, at one of their meetings, they discuss'd that grand point, whether Adam had a navel or not; and for sure and sound terms of communion, none can exceed them; they are specially careful to keep out every one that smells any thing of orthodoxy; I myself know a certain youth refus'd, merely because he was too religious and orthodox; and surely no man could have done otherwise that in the least favoured moderation; and for defending sound principles, they superlatively excel; such as, there is no sin in hell, no original sin, and the pre-existent state of souls, &c.

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